

How to Feed Fish

Explore this Article [Choosing a Dry Fish Food](#) [Feeding Your Fish Dry Food](#) [Supplementing Dry](#)

[Food to Form a Complete Diet](#) [Article Summary](#) [Questions & Answers](#) [Related Articles](#)

Feeding fish is simple once you know how. Just make sure that the dry food you are using is well suited to the fish species, as described below. Once you have found a food that works well and are feeding the fish the right amount, begin supplementing their diet with insects, vegetables, or other nutritious foods depending on the type of fish.

Method **1**

Choosing a Dry Fish Food

1.

1

Research your fish species. People at the store where you purchased your fish should be able to help you pick out a fish food if you cannot find information specific to your species online. Find out whether your fish are **herbivores**, **carnivores**, or **omnivores**, and ideally the exact % of protein the fish species requires in its diet. Some exotic species require special diets, but most fish can be fed basic "fish food" flakes or pellet. However, don't go rushing to the pet store yet.

2.

2

Find a fish food specific to your fish if possible. Many aquarium fish are fed with a general purpose fish food, or one intended for a broad category such as "tropical fish." As long as you read this section carefully, your fish may do fine with the right type of general food. However, if you can find a fish food specific to your fish species or group of related species, your fish will most likely be healthier and happier. These should be labeled clearly as "cichlid food," "beta food," etc.

- It's still a good idea to follow the other steps in this section to check a fish food's suitability before purchasing it.

3.

3

Pick food that floats, sinks, or slowly sinks depending on your fish's mouth shape. You can ask an aquarium store employee for advice if necessary, but often watching your fish's behavior or mouth shape will be enough to find out what type of food to buy. Bottom feeders such as catfish spend time at the bottom of the tank, with their down-turned or underside mouths searching for food. Mid-feeders have mouths pointing straight ahead and search for food in the middle of the tank. Surface feeders have upturned mouths and cluster to the surface when they are fed.^[1] If you are unsure what type your fish is, simply try out a food and see if they successfully find and eat it; some fish may not be restricted to one area.^[2]

- **Flake** food floats, and is only suitable for surface feeders.
- **Grain, granule, or pellet** food may float, sink slowly, or sink rapidly. Try to find more information on the label before buying.
- **Wafer** food sinks to the bottom, and is usually too large to be "stolen" by surface feeders.
- **Tablet** food can be dropped to the bottom of the tank, or, sometimes, stuck to the inside wall of the aquarium to provide food for mid-feeders.

4.

4

Check the protein content of the fish food. Use the results of your research to narrow down the type of fish food to buy. Herbivores and omnivores require fish food made mostly from vegetable material, such as spirulina. Depending on species, their fish food should contain anywhere from 5% to 40% protein, so research the species thoroughly to narrow down your options. Carnivores, on the other hand require a diet between 45% and 70% protein, depending on species.^[3] Make sure the fish food you buy matches the needs of your fish.

- Bettas are carnivores and surface feeders. Their food should contain at least 45% protein, float, and be small enough to fit in the betta's mouth. Betta food is often sold in the form of tiny pellets.^[4]
 - Goldfish are omnivores, and require 30% protein as adults, or 45% as young fish. Aquatic plant proteins are easiest for them to digest.^[5] They are surface feeders, so flakes are a good choice.
- 5.

5

Make sure your food is small enough for your fish to eat. Many fish swallow their food whole, which means they are unable to break apart large flakes or pellets that do not fit inside

their mouth. If the food you are giving your fish is going untouched, or if it looks bigger than your fish's mouth, crush it into pieces before feeding or find a smaller type of food.

6.

6

Look up fish food companies online. Before purchasing a dry fish food, search for the brand name and reviews. Well-respected companies that get good reviews from aquarium hobbyists are more likely to make high-quality fish food.^[6]

Score
0 / 3

Method 1 Quiz

What kind of food sinks to the bottom and is usually too large to be "stolen" by surface feeders?

- ☐ Flake
- ☐ Wafer
- ☐ Pellet
- ☐ Tablet

Method2

Feeding Your Fish Dry Food

1.

1

Feed in tiny portions. While many people have heard that fish require a "pinch" of flake food each feeding, giving them too large a pinch can give the fish digestive problems or make the tank dirty and unhealthy. Whatever type of dry food you are using, only put in as much food as your fish can eat in 3 to 5 minutes.^[7] If you put too much food in the tank, scoop it out with a fine net.

- **Warning:** Betta fish should be fed much less than they can eat in 5 minutes. Two or three small pellets per betta is sufficient.^[8]

2.

2

Soak pellet foods before feeding. Because many aquarium fish have small stomachs, pellets that absorb water and expand in size may cause digestive problems or bloating in your fish. Soak the pellets in water for 10 minutes before feeding so they expand before the fish eat it, rather than in the fish's stomach.^[9]

3.

3

Feed the fish once or twice a day. Because it is much easier to overfeed most fish than to give them too little food, one feeding a day may be safer. However, if you are careful to give them small amounts of food as described above, you may feed the fish twice a day. Some aquarium owners prefer this because the fish become more active and interesting to watch during feeding.

4.

4

Look for signs of overfeeding. If a trail of poop is hanging from your fish, their intestine may be partially blocked due to overfeeding or the wrong type of food.^[10] If the water gets dirty

enough that you need to [do a water change](#) more than once a week, you may be overfeeding the fish, or the tank may be overcrowded. Reduce the amount of food per serving or the number of servings per day to see if the problem goes away within a few days. Ask an aquarium store employee or fish raising hobbyist for advice if it does not.

5.

5

Spread out the food so everyone gets some. Even within the same species, the larger or more aggressive fish may not leave enough food for the other fish. Reduce the chance of this

happening by dividing the food and adding it to more than one area of the tank, or by sprinkling it evenly across the entire water surface.

6.

6

Watch for problems if you have multiple types of fish. If you have fish in your tank that feed in different areas of the tank, or on different types of food, you will likely need to purchase more than one fish food. Watch mixed-species tanks closely during feeding when you start them on a new food. You may need to find different combinations of food or feeding times if the fish at the surface eat all the food intended for the fish at the bottom. If some of your fish are active during

the day and others at night, feeding them at two different times may help ensure that each fish gets enough food.^[11]

7.

7

Consider your options while away on vacation. Leaving adult fish alone without food for a few days is almost always safe, and if you research your fish species online you may discover they can survive without serious risk for one or two weeks.^[12] For longer trips, or for young fish with more urgent food requirements, you'll need a way to feed them while you're gone. Choose from one of the following solutions:^[13]

- Use an automatic feed dispenser to dispense food at regular intervals. Make sure you supply enough food for the whole time you'll be away, and set the dispenser to release food once or twice a day.
- Test a feeder block or gel feeder before leaving. These blocks of dry or gel-covered food are left in the tank and eaten slowly. However, the dry blocks may cause dangerous chemical changes, while the gel variety sometimes go ignored. Test either variety for a few days before leaving so you can be sure there are no problems.
- Have a friend or neighbor feed them their usual flake food once every two or three days. Because inexperienced feeders often give too much food, it's best to place each pinch of food in a pillbox or other container with the day of the week carefully marked on it. Make it clear to the caretaker that overfeeding could kill your fish.